

EPC Work Session -- Monday, November 5, 2012

Convened at 7:36pm

(attending: Steve Walz, Ryan W., Ryan Sloan, Josh, Chinling, Scott, Kurt, Danielle)

--No public comments

John Noelle - City Arborist, Dept. of Recreation

Presentation regarding the City's Urban Forestry Master Plan

Four major categories of recommendations:

- A. management of urban forestry program (John's program)
- B. public education and outreach
- C. planting more trees
- D. maintenance of newly planted and established trees

A. Management of urban forestry program

--urban forestry program was underneath park planning, but has now been separated out to a new "Natural Resources" division: urban forestry, along with horticulture program, natural lands mgmt., Jerome Buddy Ford Nature Center

--natural lands section (Rob Simmons) is developing a master plan of all City's natural areas, how we can improve/maintain them, plus opportunities to expand

--JBF Nature Center -- great opportunity for outreach

--they want to establish a baseline measurement of the tree canopy, and their now in year 2 of a 3-year process; they've been using satellite and GIS processes. The third year may need to be skipped; GIS dept. hasn't found a good source for data that can be used this year. Once John and his staff have that, they'll be better able to determine what's going on with tree canopy, which areas are experiencing a loss of canopy, which areas are gaining. John thinks the City is in the neighborhood of 30-35% currently. Completion of the baseline will also let them figure out what the tree canopy percentage looks like in the City's parks.

--Park Planning division is developing master plans for each of the parks. This will include looking at trees in the parks

B. Public education and outreach

--in order to promote planting on private property--probably the City's biggest challenge (losing trees on private property)--they're continuing to do the biannual (fall and spring) tree sale

--Dennison Landscape Company has been the successful bidder for a number of years for this

--trees are typically 1-inch caliper, in pots; Dennison comes up with list of trees that are available

--City doesn't handle any of the money. ~75 trees were sold at the sale they did a couple weeks ago at Northridge, at the fall sale

--City's horticulturalist, JBF NC director, John work with the cooperative extension service (Arlington and Alexandria), tree steward service, master gardeners, master naturalists in doing instruction, tree walks, other programs to coordinate volunteer hours for weed pulls, tree pruning, etc. The tree stewards, master gardeners, and master naturalists all need to accumulate a certain number of volunteer hours in order to maintain their designations

--John will try to let T&ES staff and EPC know when the tree sales are coming up, so that we and city staff can help publicize them

C. Planting more trees

- Their annual \$113,000 budget allows planting ~400-500 trees a year. Plan is for CIP budget to go up \$20-\$25K each year, beginning in 2018, to allow planting (ultimately) an extra ~400 trees a year. Some of these will be planted in parks, where we can ultimately get larger, broader canopy trees in place (as opposed to street trees)
- 250-300 trees are removed each year, so about 200 more trees a year are being planted
- they'll need to get more permeable area and increased planting on private property, to reach the 40% canopy target
- most of the areas where street trees are being planted are less than 4 feet in width

D. Maintenance of newly planted and established trees

- maintenance is predominantly response-driven, so there isn't much opportunity for being proactive
- ideally they'd like to be on a 5- to 7-year maintenance rotation schedule for trees, but they're not able to keep on top of this
- June 29th storm, plus Hurricane Sandy, gave them a lot of work. Most of the damage has been on private property, mostly in the Northridge area. Street trees (silver maples and Bradford pears) were lost, too

ALSO:

- they're trying to incorporate tree planting--and maintenance--into development plans
- when they ask for funding for trees in parks, they're trying to also make sure that people allocate money for maintenance
- when they remove trees, they send a form to the adjoining property owners asking them what tree they want to see planted next to their home (provided they want one)
- they have asked for volunteers to adopt trees along Commonwealth Avenue, but it's been tough (difficulty in getting water to the trees)
- they're looking into extending the warranty for the trees that they're buying, to provide encouragement for watering during the summer, mulching and pruning
- they're also looking at alternative ways to plant trees (tree trenches, engineered soils underneath sidewalks to increase porosity and thus access to oxygen for trees)
- discussion of incorporating tree planting into best management practices (BMPs), work with developers, riparian areas
- discussion of Potomac Yards, developers' requirements, size of trees in the area, trade-offs between push for Metro station, density of development, etc.
- Q: Is the adopt-a-tree program (like New York City is doing) anywhere in their planning?
- A: No, but adopt-a-garden is. Sometimes people who volunteer in adopt-a-garden programs move so that you don't have a volunteer any more for that garden
- discussion of using technology (tree numbering, public access to tree care logs) to help line up and organize volunteers to water trees; this could be an iPhone app pretty easily. This could be a project that we ask Joe Schilling to line up a graduate student for us on

GW Middle School Tree Project

- Danielle discussed that EPC wants to revive this project

- Peter Pennington, although off EPC, wants to stay involved in this
- Discussion of the role of Parks & Planning in maintenance of the schools' grounds, and involvement in planning related to school grounds

IT Leads for EPC

- Discussion of the commission's online and social media presence
- Chinling volunteered to take the lead on the Facebook page and the EPC Forum, which is linked to on the City's EPC page

Other business

- Waterfront Commission: Ryan Wojtanowski volunteered to be our representative
- MOTION by Steve Walz to designate Ryan W. as our representative, SECONDED by Danielle, passed unanimously
- Mirant Community Monitoring Group (MCMG) is continuing, due to community interest in how the plant is to be decommissioned and issues related to the long-term lease v. property owner; Steve Walz will cover the next meeting of MCMG for us
 - MCMG (which will likely be renamed) has formally identified members, chosen by the mayor
 - planning for the GenOn area is at least a year away, given the need to hash out decommissioning and ownership/development issues
 - City has very little authority over MCMG work until it becomes a planning issue for redevelopment of the area
- Geoff is giving an EPC presentation to Lynnhaven neighborhood group tonight
- Josh attended a meeting of the Bureaugard small area plan implementation group
- Transportation Commission meets Wednesday night
- 10:00am at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments - IGBG (green building group) meeting, Steve will be giving a presentation on building codes
- November 15th there's a meeting of the North Old Town Civic Association, which will include discussion of MCMG stuff
- November 15th is also the date for an Agenda Alexandria meeting regarding the new citizen input process initiative